

TALKING POINTS ON LIBBY WOOD CHIP MATERIAL

- Under this administration, EPA has stepped up its commitment to finish the job of protecting the health and future of the people of Libby.
- EPA has made significant investments and progress in helping to remove the threat of asbestos in the land and air, and with it, the increased risks of lung cancer, asbestosis, and other respiratory problems.
- EPA recently delivered on a promise made to the community to conduct science on the toxicity levels of Libby Amphibole and we delivered preliminary information to the community in May at a well attended town hall meeting.
- EPA understands the community's concern on the wood chip materials and recognizes that the distribution of wood chips could be of concern considering the recently derived draft Libby Amphibole toxicity values. We are committed to providing the public up-to-date information about this issue.
- While we have been aware that material from the Stimson Mill Site was being sold, we have data indicating that the material contains only low levels of asbestos.
 - When we discovered that there was asbestos in the Kootenai Forest surrounding the mine, we became concerned about this wood chip pile on the Stimson Mill site. In 2007 we tested the pile, made the results publicly available in 2008 and shared the results with the Kootenai River Development Council. The majority, 16 of 20, of wood chip samples did not show detections of asbestos. None of the ABS sample results indicated exposure to asbestos.
- In 2011, based on the community's concern and recently derived Libby Amphibole toxicity values, EPA recommended to the KRDC that the material not be sold until we have more information.
- EPA is reevaluating the available data and will conduct additional sampling this summer to further clarify what, if any, risk this material poses to the residents. In the meantime, residents that are concerned should call ERS.
- We have provided best management practices to the community including "Yard Work and Gardening Activities", "Libby and Troy Residents, Vermiculite or Asbestos In or Around Your Home and Business" which are useful guides to minimize risk.
- Our work has made real and significant improvements in the Libby community and we will continue to get the job done to reduce exposure to asbestos in the community.

Questions and Answers

- **Why didn't EPA stop the sale and distribution of material from the Stimson Mill sooner?** The federal government only regulates commercial product containing asbestos at greater than one percent. EPA concluded, based on 2007 sampling results, that the material was unlikely to be a significant source of asbestos exposure. Because of community concerns and the recently derived Libby Amphibole-specific toxicity values, which suggest very low levels may pose a health risk; EPA has requested that the activity be stopped.

EPA sampled the wood chips in October 2007 and received final results in July of 2008. The majority, 16 of 20, of wood chip samples did not show detections of asbestos. None of the ABS sample results indicated exposure to asbestos. EPA had numerous conversations with the Kootenai River Development Council (KRDC) concerning the wood chip pile. EPA provided the analytical results to KRDC in August 2009. The maximum asbestos concentration from tree bark samples located close to the mine is below one percent, .08 percent. The trees closest to the mine would be expected to contain the highest levels of asbestos. The wood chip pile is comprised from trees harvested throughout the northwest United States. Therefore, the concentrations in the wood chip pile are expected to be well below the one percent regulatory threshold.

- **What is the risk posed to those property owners who have this material now on their properties?** The activity based sampling data that we have do not indicate any asbestos exposure occurring from this material. EPA will reanalyze a portion of the bulk wood chip samples taken from the site in 2007 and will conduct new, wood chip and activity based sampling at the Stimson Mill to evaluate potential residential exposure.
- **Why is it taking so long for EPA to fully investigate these wood piles?** They are large, which would seem to indicate a potentially huge source of asbestos contamination. The Libby Asbestos Site contains many potential sources of asbestos contamination. EPA must prioritize our response activities to address the worst sources and highest exposures first. Preference has been given to schools, homes and other areas where children may be exposed. EPA's previous sampling results and historical information suggest that the wood chip piles are not a significant source of asbestos contamination.
- **What action is EPA taking now?**
First, EPA has asked KRDC to stop sale of the wood chips. Unless EPA can confirm that the wood chip material pose an unacceptable risk or an imminent and substantial

endangerment to public health or the environment, the Agency does not have the authority to stop KRDC from selling and distributing the material from the site.

Second, EPA intends to further assess the level of asbestos in the wood chip materials. EPA will reanalyze a portion of the bulk samples taken from the site in 2007 and will conduct new, activity based sampling based as well.

Finally, EPA is committed to keeping the residents of Libby informed about this issue through newspaper articles, public meetings, and other avenues.

- **Why won't EPA track the material that was sold from the site?** The federal government only regulates commercial product containing asbestos at greater than one percent. Samples of the wood chip piles so far do not suggest asbestos levels will approach or exceed regulated levels.
- **How did EPA communicate to the community that material from the wood piles could contain asbestos?** EPA did not conduct broad outreach to inform the public about this issue because sampling results did not indicate excessive exposures. We did make the information available in published reports, on the web and with individual community members and local elected officials.
- **How will people in Libby who placed this material in their yards be made aware of the problem?** We're not certain it is a problem. However, EPA is committed to alerting the residents of Libby by issuing information in the local paper, discussing this issue at public meetings, etc...
- **What should property owners do now?** In general, property owners should use Best Management Practices with this material, just as they would with any potentially contaminated material. If they have material from the Stimson site in their yard and EPA has not yet remediated their yard, they should notify the EPA contractor of the issue at the time of their property investigation. If their yard has already undergone a removal and they placed material there since that time, they should call EPA's Libby Information Center or the Environmental Resource Specialist Program for assistance. The EPA on-site project manager or the Environmental Resource Specialist will advise them on what steps to take.

Timeline

2007 - EPA collected samples in October from the wood chips at the Stimson Mill property. Asbestos was detected in 4 of 20 samples analyzed. EPA also collected personal air monitoring data on workers and equipment operators at the site. No asbestos was detected in these activity based samples. Discussions were held with the party responsible for the wood chip pile regarding the potential for asbestos contamination.

2008 - EPA evaluated the data published in "The Libby Asbestos Site OU5 Final Sampling Summary Report 2007 Investigations", dated July 25, 2008. EPA made this report available at the Libby information center in August 2008.

2009 - EPA provided the sampling results in a letter to the property owner on August 27.

2011 - Based on community concerns and developing, new information regarding the toxicity of Libby Amphibole asbestos, EPA sent a letter on March 25 to the property owner reminding him that state and local regulations apply to any asbestos containing material. On April 13, EPA representative Steve Wharton verbally requested that the selling and distribution of wood chips be stopped. In May, EPA briefed the Libby community, local, state, and congressional delegations on the draft IUR and RFC for Libby Amphibole.